



Menopause: The Better Way To Deal With It

by Dr. Ruan Jin Zhao



In Chinese medicine, the physiological stages are defined in seven-year segments. At age seven, kidney energy is getting stronger, permanent teeth begin to appear and hair grows longer. During the second seven years, Tian Gui (a pituitary gland and sex hormone) arrives, the Ren meridian opens up, the Chong meridian is full of energy, menstruation starts, and childbearing is possible. In the seventh cycle of seven years, a woman's Ren meridian energy drops, and energy in the Chong meridian is getting weaker. The Tian Gui hormone is no longer produced and menstruation stops, resulting in an inability to become pregnant. Some women have genetically strong kidney energy, and their Tian Gui can last much longer than 49 years. Also, if the kidneys are cared for very well, their Tian Gui may stay longer.

For women, menstruation, pregnancy, and child birth are natural physiological occurrences, but they are also critical times in a woman's health. If each step is handled well, the following steps will be easier. Otherwise, problems may occur.

From the first menstruation, a woman should pay attention to her periods. During those times, she should not eat many cold foods or drink cold beverages. She should not touch cold water or bathe with cold water. The body temperature should be maintained at a relatively warm level, which is good for the blood flow and helps to avoid blood stasis and coagulation. If the menstruation blood can not be expelled, it will cause cramping thereby blocking the energy flow. Also, good hygiene care should be remembered, no strenuous physical exercise, intercourse, or drug interference (some ladies purposely postpone their periods due to certain events in their lives), and also no emotional disturbances like anger or stress. In the U.S., this aspect of health education is very poor. Many young women in their puberty are put on birth control pills, which may last for the next ten or fifteen years. These factors may explain why so many young women are suffering from endometriosis and fibroid diseases. It may also explain why having a hysterectomy is so common in the U.S. Once a woman has problems with menstruation, it may affect her whole life, and can often lead to infertility. Parents should watch and educate their daughters in these areas.

The secondary stage or critical moment for a woman is pregnancy. Right now in this society, most women already know the serious care needed during pregnancy. There is to be no alcohol or smoking all the while getting enough nutrients. Maintaining a happy and pleasant mood is also good for the baby's development and can prevent complications during pregnancy.

The most important thing, often neglected, is post partum care. As such, it is the third most critical moment in a woman's life. In China, the new mom will stay in bed for at least two weeks. Traditionally, the baby's grandmother takes care of everything including the new baby. After nine months of pregnancy, the body requires at least one month to recover. This is called "Zuo Yue Zi." Because of the rapid pace in this society, almost no new mom can get one month of bed rest in the U.S. I truly think it is crucial and certainly not fair to women. This is a major reason so many women suffer from body aches and joint problems in their later years. A mother's muscle skeletal system, neurological system, endocrine system, and psychological system indeed take time to re-balance.

Finally, a woman arrives at Menopause. The ovaries stop producing eggs, and at the same time the ovaries will retire from the duty of manufacturing estrogen. Often, women abuse themselves in their youth with too much coffee or adrenal gland stimulants (chocolate, pain medicine, and birth control pills), and crazy fitness exercise to keep the body in shape which ends up exhausting their adrenal glands. During menopause, the retired ovaries will transfer their function to the adrenal glands which in turn excrete more cortisone from the adrenal cortex. The cortisone causes women to experience hot flashes, night sweats and/or mood swings.

In the normal physiological situation, men and women can have estrogen produced by their adrenal glands, but in very limited amounts. Ovaries and testicles produce the major amounts of sexual hormones. The retirement of the ovaries from making estrogen reduces the risk of cancer. It is natural to transfer that duty to the adrenal glands.

I have observed many patients who have not taken any hormone replacements after a total hysterectomy. They do not have any clinical symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. Surprisingly they still have beautiful skin and a normal libido. I have also found that they do not experience vaginal dryness and their bone density is good.

So based on this theory, it is absolutely wrong to suppress the adrenal glands function and inhibit the flow of cortisone. Instead, women must teach the adrenal glands to excrete estrogen and not cortisone. It takes time for the adrenal glands to learn the new trick - about 3~4 months. Women should be aware of adrenal gland suppressors such as black cohosh, aloe vera and remefeine. It is fine to use them temporarily but if taken continuously, the long term result will not satisfy the patient. The correct remedies should be adrenal gland cultivators such as Dang Gui (Chinese angelica root), Di Huang (Rehmenia root), Huang Jing (Sichuan salomon root) and Lu Rong (Deer Horn) to let the adrenal glands gain more strength and work smarter. Women should also avoid overuse of adrenal gland stimulants such as coffee, chocolate and wine, which can aggravate the hot flashes and night sweats. Menopause starts from the kidney essence dropping so it is logical to increase the kidney essence with herbal remedies. When kidney essence is recovered, the adrenal glands will produce more estrogen and less cortisone, so the hot flashes, night sweats and mood swings will naturally diminish. In Chinese medicine, we call it treating the root or cause.

In general, women should pay attention to each critical physiological moment so that when menopause comes it will be much easier. Prevention will make all the difference in the natural cycles of womanhood.



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